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**PRESIDENT**  
Ralph A. Wolff

July 5, 2011

Geoffrey M. Cox  
President  
Alliant International University  
10455 Pomerado Road  
San Diego, CA 92131

Dear President Cox:

At its meeting June 22-24, 2011, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to Alliant International University March 22-24, 2011. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report prepared by Alliant prior to the visit and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted in spring 2009. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you, Provost Russ Newman, and Associate Provost Patty Mullen. Your comments were very helpful.

Alliant's 2007 Institutional Proposal outlined four areas of focus for this comprehensive review: (1) building out the new vision for Alliant, (2) addressing enrollment needs, (3) sustaining financial sustainability, and (4) responding to concerns about academic rigor. These areas were subsequently refined for the CPR and the EER. The EER team "was pleased with the alignment among the three reports" and commended Alliant for producing well-written, well-organized, evidence-based self-studies "supported by a series of data reports of exemplary detail and scope."

The CPR team made several recommendations, endorsed by the Commission, related to: (1) adjunct faculty: improving the orientation, evaluation, professional development, and support of adjuncts; (2) information technology: strengthening the campus network and the technological support available on the campuses; (3) assessment and program review: moving expeditiously to develop comprehensive systems of assessment and program review; and (4) undergraduate enrollments: assuring an appropriate and critical mass of undergraduate students in its various locations.

The EER team found that Alliant responded thoughtfully to these recommendations. The institution made good progress in some areas, and needs to improve in others. Regarding adjuncts, a variety of new programs and services has been put in place since the CPR. The Commission endorses the team's praise of Alliant for "positive steps to better integrate Alliant's many adjunct faculty into the academic community and governance structure." In the area of assessment, Alliant showed "commendable growth" but nonetheless was determined by the team to be at the "emerging stage." Most, but not all, programs have developed student learning outcomes at the institutional, program and course level, mapped those outcomes against the curriculum, collected and evaluated measures of student learning, and are using the results to make improvements.

Alliant selected four themes for its EER: (1) preparing professional practitioners, (2) evaluating quality and rigor in academic functions, (3) aligning resources with mission,

and (4) sustaining and expanding a culture of evidence. The team found much to commend and concluded that overall, Alliant's "efforts to create an organization committed to learning and improvement are to be lauded." Accomplishments include the careful monitoring of retention and graduation rates; surveys of student satisfaction administered every other year; ongoing attention to diversity and multiculturalism through I-MERIT competencies; development of program-specific educational outcomes tied to Alliant's Professional Practice Competencies, and "the various and creative ways that faculty have identified for capturing evidence of the competencies;" strong faculty engagement and involvement and an active faculty senate; and a dedicated and resourceful library staff.

The Commission noted several areas for improvement, related to both capacity and educational effectiveness, and these are set forth below. In addition, the team noted that the Fresno Clinical Psychology PsyD program has been placed on probation by its external accreditor, the American Psychological Association and the Commission expects an update on this matter at the time of Alliant's next interaction with WASC.

The Commission endorses the findings and recommendations of the EER team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for further attention and development:

**Ensuring Educational Effectiveness.** The team found that Alliant is at the emerging stage of formal program review. The University has a program review system consisting of written annual reports to the deans and periodic intensive reviews, conducted every six or seven years, that involve site visits by internal peer review teams. While all academic programs have completed annual reports (which provide a self-examination of a program's goals, finances, operations, outcomes, student data, etc.), only three of the five programs, at the time of the visit, had completed intensive reviews. The team found that faculty and administrators see program review "as a helpful and sustainable process that should make it easier to complete external self-studies," and that results from these reviews are being used for programmatic improvements. The Commission expects the University to refine its processes to promote greater utility of the results for the faculty, to encompass the use of external reviewers, and to link the findings of the reviews to institution-level planning and budgeting. Reviews should be conducted of all programs. The Commission also recommends that Alliant extend efforts in program review to its co-curricular and student services. (CFRs 2.7, 4.4)

**Promoting Student Success.** With regard to student success, the team observed that faculty and administrators are "actively engaged in reviewing, discussing, and looking for ways to address [retention and graduation] rates that are determined not to be appropriate." For the domestic undergraduate programs, which enroll fewer than 200 students, the overall average six-year graduation rate for transfer students (degree completion) in the past three years is 47 percent. For the domestic graduate programs, which enroll more than 4000 students, rates vary by school and degree but the overall average four-year graduation rate is 73 percent in the past three years. Graduation rates of African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Latino students are consistently lower than the rates of white students at the graduate level. The Commission recommends that Alliant continue monitoring graduation and retention rates, benchmark retention and graduation rates against similar institutions, identify strategies and good practices that will address this achievement gap, and set targets and timelines for improvement. (CFRs 1.5, 1.7, 2.5, 2.6, 2.10, 4.3)

**Building the Academic Culture and Practices of the San Francisco Law School.** The team found that since Alliant acquired the Law School in July 2010, it has been "engaged in implementation of a comprehensive integration plan." However, the Law School does not currently meet WASC Standards. It is not yet fully integrated with Alliant and lacks several of the expected characteristics of an academic culture at the graduate level. The Commission urges Alliant to move quickly to address this concern.

Among the changes that need to be made are retaining at least one full-time faculty member (CFRs 2.1, 2.2b and related Guideline, 3.2), developing a system for faculty to fulfill its role in governance (CFR 3.1-3.3, 3.11), supporting scholarship and creative activity appropriate for a professional doctoral program (CFRs 2.2b, 2.8, 2.9), building capacity for the assessment of student learning and demonstrating that students are meeting outcomes (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 4.6-4.8), and conducting a program review of the JD program using Alliant's "intensive review" process (CFRs 2.7, 4.4). The Commission expects that Alliant will be able to present evidence showing substantial progress in bringing the Law School into alignment with the Standards by the time of the next visit, which is set forth below. (Standards 1, 2, 3, 4)

**Supporting the Staff.** During the visit, the team learned about morale problems among the staff. "After a few years of no salary increases, pay cuts, and the addition of 'required' usage of vacation days, [staff report] a sense of inequity and overall lack of appreciation." The Commission commends Alliant for creating a Staff Council, which the team found to be "an effective vehicle for linking, coordinating, and improving the work of Alliant's complex endeavors..." and for hiring a new Human Resources Director. However, to improve morale and fully engage the Alliant staff, the Commission calls on the University to address the team's recommendation that it "develop more effective platforms to leverage the expertise, knowledge, creativity, and voice of Alliant staff" with the goal of improving Alliant's educational effectiveness. (CFR 1.3, 1.8, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1)

**Improving Information Technology.** The team found that "information technology remains both a challenge and a high priority for the near term" and concluded that increasing the bandwidth, expanding email capacity, and redesigning websites all require attention and resources. Because of the critical role of technology, the Commission recommends that Alliant move forward on these initiatives and take steps to clarify and support leadership, roles and responsibilities in information technology. (CFR 3.7)

**Addressing the Challenges of the International Sites.** The EER team identified a variety of challenges facing Hong Kong, Tokyo and Mexico City locations. While each site has its unique strengths and areas needing improvement, there are some overarching concerns, such as advising, library access and resources, accreditation issues in the host country, progress in assessment and program review, and administrative support. The Commission asks that Alliant review the issues raised in the reports about the international sites and take steps to make needed improvements. (CFRs 2.3-2.7, 2.10-2.13, 3.1, 3.6, 4.1-4.5)

**Implementing Planned Changes in the Relationship with Presidio Graduate School.** Alliant and Presidio entered into an agreement eight years ago with the understanding that Presidio would become part of Alliant, then would later become independent and seek its own WASC accreditation. Because of the lack of either full integration of Presidio into Alliant or concrete steps for Presidio to seek its own accreditation, WASC staff informed Alliant in fall 2010 that the arrangement could not be continued and that changes needed to occur by June 1, 2011. Alliant and Presidio have now signed a new agreement that clarifies the nature of the relationship to conform to WASC expectations and indicates that Presidio will apply for its own independent accreditation by September 1, 2011. Because of its relationship to Alliant, Presidio will be able to apply for eligibility as an accredited institution, which potentially allows Presidio a pathway to becoming accredited following a single report and visit. As formally agreed to by Alliant and Presidio, the Commission expects to see an Eligibility Application from Presidio for its own independent accreditation no later than September 1, 2011 and expects Presidio to proceed swiftly to meet planned timelines for achieving independence and accreditation. The Commission is pleased to see that a clear statement of the relationship between Presidio and Alliant has been posted on the Presidio website and expects that similar statements will be in Presidio print and online materials by December 31, 2011. (CFR 1.9)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report and reaffirm the accreditation of Alliant International University.
2. Schedule Alliant's next comprehensive review visit for spring 2019. As you know, the Commission is in the process of considering major revisions to the current three-stage institutional review process. It expects these revisions to be adopted by June 2012 and implemented during the following two years. Once the revised process is adopted, WASC staff will communicate with you and your ALO to explain the impact of any changes on your next comprehensive review and on the interactions you may have with WASC before that review.
3. Request an Interim Report to be submitted on March 1, 2012 to address two issues: the sustainability of the Mexico City campus and the status of Presidio. In terms of Mexico City, the Commission is concerned about its long-term viability as an ongoing academic enterprise, given past problems in management of the campus, low enrollments, and its operating deficit. In terms of Presidio, the Commission expects significant progress on its path toward independent accreditation, including a decision by the Eligibility Review Committee (ERC). If Presidio fails to submit an Eligibility Application by September 1, 2011 or is not found eligible by the ERC, the Commission expects by March 1, 2012 a plan on how Presidio will be brought more fully under the control of Alliant International University.
4. Schedule a special visit in spring 2013 to focus on the Law School. The Commission expects to see significant progress in integrating the Law School with the University; hiring an appropriate number of full-time faculty members and developing a faculty staffing plan; engaging faculty in curriculum development, admissions and establishment and application of academic standards and policies; supporting faculty scholarship; assessing student learning; assessing co-curricular and student services functions; and gathering, analyzing and interpreting three years of data on student enrollment, retention, graduation rates and bar pass rates – disaggregated by gender, race, and ethnicity – with specific plans to address disparities and/or low rates.
5. Request an Interim Report in to be submitted on March 1, 2013 to address other areas highlighted in this letter, including refining the intensive program review process and completing reviews on schedule; using the results of program review for improvement and for planning and budgeting; aligning student learning outcomes with professional competencies (A-IMPACT) and multicultural competencies (I-MERIT); assessing and evaluating co-curricular and student services; implementing technology initiatives; describing steps that have been taken to improve staff morale and engagement; reporting on changes in areas needing attention at the international sites in Hong Kong and Tokyo; and reporting on the specialized accreditation of the Fresno PsyD program.

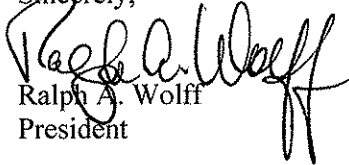
In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that Alliant International University has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has successfully completed the three-stage review conducted under the Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to continue its progress, particularly with respect to educational effectiveness and student learning.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Alliant's governing board in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be

widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement, and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in them.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the University undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WASC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while assuring public accountability, and we are grateful for your continued support of our process. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,

  
Ralph A. Wolff  
President

RW/bgd

cc: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair  
Russ Newman, ALO  
Elizabeth Fetter, Board Chair  
Members of the EER team  
Barbara Gross Davis